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Vietnam (background)

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NSC BRIEFING

25 January 1955

VIETNAM NOTES

1. Serious fighting between Viet Minh and would-be refugees at Vinh [REDACTED] This is in addition to recent incident at Ba Lang, Thanh Hoa province. Viet Minh efforts at Ba Lang to conceal refugee pressure did not fool truce inspection team. ICC Headquarters in Hanoi swamped with over 20,000 separate protests against Viet Minh brutality, coercion, etc. Viet Minh's repeated denials of press reports on refugee situation indicate its embarrassment this score.

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Diem demanded on 22 January that ICC extend time limit for refugee movement in view Viet Minh obstruction.

2. Contrary to their earlier categorical assurances, the French have promised to remove US-financed mining equipment from Tonkin "provided this evacuation does not provoke any grave incident."

3. Ministry of Associated States official told our Paris embassy on 21 January that the French government had received no inquiry from the Viet Minh concerning the establishment of a free port at Haiphong, nor did he believe the Viet Minh would be willing to make such a concession although Sainteny apparently intends to broach the subject. This information is contrary to that given out by Mendes-France in November when he sought to convey the impression that this proposal had originated with the Viet Minh.

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4. Tran Van Huu's anti-government intrigue, which apparently has French support, is continuing in Saigon. According to unsubstantiated reports he has been in contact with a wide assortment of Vietnamese political figures, and is being supplied with French money via the Binh Xuyen.

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5.

The latest report from Paris is that Bao Dai is still in a state of painful indecision on the question of returning to Vietnam.

6. Secretary Dulles in a personal letter to Mendes-France has urged that a French-US agreement on the autonomy of the Vietnamese army and on American responsibility for its training under Ely's general authority be reached immediately. The Secretary deplored the "increasingly sterile" argument which has developed over the manner of presenting to the Vietnamese government the terms of this agreement which was drafted by Ely and Collins on 13 December. A subsequent French redraft of 7 January differed from the Ely-Collins agreement on autonomy for Vietnamese forces and on American training responsibility.

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